

Opening Statement of Walter B. Slocombe
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
to the Senate Armed Services Committee
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DEFENSE ASPECTS OF UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD IRAQ

Thank you. It is, as always, an honor to be here to address issues of DOD's role in implementing our Iraq policies. In this open session, there are substantial limits to the degree to which we can go into the details, and I therefore appreciate the Committee's willingness to have a closed session immediately following.

There is no need in this forum to expound on the threat that Saddam Hussein's regime poses to the security of the Gulf, to the international order, and to efforts to curtail the spread of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, and the means for their delivery. The United States remains determined, with our coalition partners, to counter the threat he poses to our interests, and those of our allies and friends in the region and around the world.

Our efforts to this end comprise diplomatic, economic, intelligence and military elements. Our principal focus today is on the military aspects.

General Zinni is here to outline for you what happened in Desert Fox, what is happening now as his forces and those of the European Command continue to enforce the No Flight Zones, and what our on-going readiness is to conduct further strike operations as necessary.

It may be useful, however, to review briefly the events leading up to Desert Fox and what we think we achieved, to set the baseline for where we go from here.

The strikes in December were necessary because they were vital to reducing the ability of Iraq to threaten the security of a region of vital importance to the United States and the international community, as well as to the credibility of the United States and the United Nations Security Council.

The military objectives of the strike were to degrade Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program and related delivery systems and its ability to wage war against its neighbors. We focused on military targets related to WMD—sites where UNSCOM was barred, organizations involved in the conduct, control, and concealment of WMD programs, and sites that produced illegal weapons materials, as well as the air defenses that protected these targets.

Our assessment is that the campaign was a success. Most obviously, there is little question that the targeting was extremely precise and effective and the collateral damage to the Iraqi civilian population was kept to an absolute minimum. Moreover, our forces were able to carry out their mission without losing a single coalition crew member or aircraft. The real gauge of success, however, is in the extent to which the campaign achieved its objectives.

As evidenced by the intensified rhetoric from Baghdad and the series of recent encounters in the no-flight zones, Saddam Hussein has been seriously affected by these strikes. We have set back the Iraqis' ballistic missile program by 1-2 years and reduced their missile production capability. We have degraded the infrastructure that Saddam uses to conceal his weapons of mass destruction, which is the same infrastructure he relies upon for regime stability. We have degraded the regime's ability to exercise command and control over its defense and security structures, and its ability to export illegal gasoil to pay for weapons of mass destruction programs. We have let Saddam know that we have the resolve to back up our demands for compliance with

international norms. In the weeks since the operation, Iraq has found itself increasingly isolated diplomatically and with fewer and fewer prospects of any relief from the dilemma into which it has placed itself.

Where do we go from here? Even in the short period since Desert Fox, we have seen statements from the regime—including Saddam Hussein himself—that are at odds with Iraq's obligation to live at peace with its neighbors. The Iraqi regime's record is strewn with the scraps of agreements broken and commitments violated. Now he has added new challenges to coalition operations in the NFZs and elsewhere, made new and direct threats to his Arab neighbors, repeated his determination to break free of sanctions without complying with the relevant UN resolutions, and even fallen to criticizing those UNSC members who have been most sympathetic to his cause.

We will need to continue to deal with the challenges posed by Iraq, and we have a strategy for doing so. As the President outlined last week, there are four elements in our strategy: maintaining sanctions, insisting on verified Iraqi compliance with arms control obligations, continuing our readiness to use military force if necessary, and, over the long term, seeking a new government in Iraq.

We will work to ensure that the Iraqi regime remains contained and under strict economic sanctions until Iraq complies with all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including those regarding weapons of mass destruction, and that compliance has been adequately verified.

The support of the GCC countries remains crucial to continued containment. While Saddam continues to have a degree of popularity among the Arab populace, the GCC governments have been supportive of our policies, because they understand the danger Saddam poses to their interests and indeed to the Arab cause. The recent Arab League statement reiterating the requirement that Iraq comply with UNSCRs

demonstrates anew this awareness. In connection with maintaining the coalition as well as for humanitarian reasons, we will continue to support the oil for food and UN humanitarian assistance programs to reduce the suffering Saddam Hussein's ambitions have inflicted on the Iraqi people, and to underscore that our quarrel is with him, not his people.

UNSCOM and the IAEA are the designated organizations for verifying and monitoring compliance with the WMD provisions of the resolutions. We want to see them back at work as soon as possible, but only if Iraq proves that it will cooperate fully in the fulfillment of their mandate. In a fundamental sense, sham inspections would be worse than no inspections at all. We will continue to reject proposals that would, in effect if not in substance, move from "disarmament" to "monitoring," without compliance with disarmament requirements. At the same time, we will continue to insist that any "monitoring" program would itself have to be designed to ensure inspection and oversight of Iraqi activities, by technically qualified professionals.

Meanwhile, we will work to prevent Baghdad from reviving its WMD programs. We will continue to focus our intelligence efforts on monitoring Iraq, and particularly its WMD programs. As we demonstrated last month, we are willing and able to use military force in response to Iraqi failures to meet these obligations. We remain fully prepared to use additional military force if necessary, if we see Iraq rebuilding its WMD capabilities.

As a key element of our strategy, the US Armed Forces maintain and will continue to maintain a powerful capability in the region to:

- Defend against Iraqi threats against UN personnel, coalition forces, or Iraq's neighbors in the region;

- Respond vigorously if Baghdad moves against the Kurds or seeks to rebuild its WMD programs; and
- Enforce the limitations—such as the sanctions, the no-flight zones in the north and south, and the no-reinforcement zone in the south—which were placed upon Iraq pursuant to resolutions of the Security Council.

General Zinni will describe in more detail the specific measures taken to ensure that we have the ready military capability for these tasks.

By these and related measures, we can and will continue to manage the problem that Iraq poses to our interests and to the security of the region. We have no illusions, however, about the likelihood that Saddam Hussein's regime will ever comply fully with its obligations, or fundamentally change its international behavior. Accordingly, we have come to the conclusion that there cannot be a fundamental, long-term improvement in the security situation in the Gulf region until there is a change of regime in Iraq.

We are therefore working along several tracks toward the objective, set forth in the Iraq Liberation Act and in statements by the President and senior Administration officials, of promoting conditions that will facilitate the transition to a new regime in Baghdad. Our efforts include increased cooperation with Iraqis opposed to the regime, inside and outside of Iraq. To that end, the Secretary of State has recently named a Special Representative for Transition in Iraq. We have also begun implementing the Iraq Liberation Act. The President has notified Congress of his intent to designate seven Iraqi opposition groups as eligible for US assistance under the Act. These are important steps forward, and we will continue to strengthen the opposition so it can seek effective change in Iraq.

We will implement the Iraq Liberation Act, but we will do so taking account of the realities of the situation. No one should underestimate the difficulties of the task of bringing about a change in this regime or the time it may take. It cannot be done by imposing a new regime by military force from without, even assuming that such would be possible, which is very doubtful. Nor, in our judgment, can it be done by encouraging an internal insurrection before the conditions exist that would make it possible for such an uprising to succeed. We cannot play recklessly with the lives of either the Americans or the Iraqis who must work together to achieve our objective. Nor can we support a course of action that would – or would seem to – lead to the division of Iraq; the US continues to support the territorial integrity of Iraq, as necessary for stability in the region, as well as to maintaining support for our efforts from key regional allies.

What we are working to do is to help create the political and military conditions that will permit a successful change of the regime, and the accession of an Iraqi government that is prepared to meet its obligations to the international community and to live at peace with its neighbors as well as its own people. We stand ready to help such a new government reintegrate Iraq into that international community, and to help the people of Iraq heal the country's internal wounds by reintegrating into a single, united Iraq all the diverse elements of their society.

This is an overall strategy that, we believe, will serve both the short term necessity to continue to contain Iraq and the long term goal of the emergence of a regime in Baghdad that can adopt genuinely different approaches to its international relations and to its own people.